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A
S E R M O N

Preached at

St. Mary-le-Bow,

TO THE
S O C I E T I E S
F O R

Reformation of Manners,
Octob. 2. 1699.

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EPH. V. xi.

*And have no fellowship with
the unfruitful works of dark-
ness, but rather reprove
them.*

BEING desired to Preach one of
the Quarterly Sermons For
Reformation of Manners, I must
own, that the greatest Motive I
had to induce me not to refuse, was the
Consideration, that if I shou'd, I thought
I might fall under a just Reproof from
this which I have read, and other pa-
rallel Texts of Scripture, which require
us to be so far from partaking with o-
thers in Sin, that we shou'd rather set
our selves to oppose it all we can. And

tho' I cannot pretend to add any thing to what has been already said by some Right Reverend Fathers, and others my Reverend and Worthy Brethren upon this Subject ; Yet, as I take it for an Honour to appear in so excellent a Cause, and amongst so good Company ; so I hope, that tho' but the same things in substance that have been said before be repeated again, and in a more homely Dress, it may yet have some good effect, and help, in some degree to farther that excellent End, which both as Men, and as Christians we are all bound to seek the Promotion of, even the beating down of Vice and Profaneness, and the Encrease of Piety and Virtue.

Without farther Preface therefore, I shall proceed to speak to the Words of the Text. And in so doing I shall,

I. Shew you what is meant by *Works of Darknes*.

II. Why they are so call'd.

III. Why

III. Why they are said to be *Unfruitful Works of Darkness*, and how well that Character agrees to 'em.

IV. I shall explain to you what is meant by having *Fellowship* with such *Works*, and what are the ordinary Ways and several Instances wherein Men are tempted to have that. And,

V. I shall shew, That Christians shou'd have a care of being drawn in by any such Temptations, and instead of that shou'd upon all occasions shew their utter dislike of these *Works of Darkness*, and be ready to reprove them, and to prevent as far as possible the Commission of them. Of which Doctrine I shall in the last place make some brief Application to the present Occasion. I begin with the First, *Viz.*

I. To shew what is meant by *Works of*
A 3 *Dark-*

Darkness. And here all will agree with me, that by *Works of Darkness*, *Works of Sin* and *Wickedness* are meant, and that of the more gross and heinous sort. Sin every one ought to know (for 'tis the Definition given by St. *John*) 1 *John*. 3.4. is nothing else but *A Transgression of the Law*. And therefore St. *Paul* says, *Rom.* 4. 15. *Where no Law is there is no Transgression*, or no Sin. But nevertheless all Sins are not alike, or of equal guilt or heinousness in their nature. And that because there is a difference in Laws, a difference in the manner of their Promulgation, and a difference in the manner also of our transgressing 'em. There is a difference in Laws: For some are concerning things of greater weight and moment than others are, and upon which the Law-giver is therefore suppos'd to lay a greater stress than he does upon others. And hence the Violation of such Laws is so much the worse. There is a difference in the Promulgation; for some Laws may not be so clearly and fully made known to all the Subjects of 'em as others are, and hence

with hence the breach of 'em may be the more
 ks of pardonable and excusable. There is a diffe-
 that rence also in the manner of a Man's trans-
 Sin gressing a Law: For he may do it wilfully
 the and deliberately, and after many warn-
 3-4. ings given him, or upon little Tempta-
 the tion; or he may be surpriz'd into it con-
 Rom. trary to his general Purpose and Resolu-
 trans- tion.

Now tho' every Transgression of the
 Law of God may be truly said to be a
Work of Darknes, yet that name scarce
 uses to be given to Sins of Infirmary or
 Weakness, to every Failing or Imperfecti-
 on, but rather to gross and heinous Sins,
 When a Man may be truly said to trans-
 gress God's Law, because he comes not
 up to the full perfection that it requires,
 or when in some lesser Instances he unwa-
 rily and unwittingly offends, as by a rash
 word suppose, an imprudent Action, a
 little mis-spence of time, or not taking an
 opportunity to do all the good one
 might; These tho' they are Faults and
 have the nature of Sins, yet the Scripture
 is hardly so severe as to stile these *Works*
 A 4 of

of *Darkness*, except it be in the general, as belonging to that kind, and partaking in a degree of that nature. But that which most properly is to be understood by *Works of Darkness*, is gross and notorious Wickedness, such as are those several kinds reckon'd up by the Apostle in the beginning of this Chapter, but more fully in the Fifth of the *Galatians* under the Name of *Works of the Flesh*, *Adultery*, *Fornication*, *Uncleanness*, *Lasciviousness*, *Idolatry*, *Witchcraft*, *Hatred*, *Variance*, *Emulations*, *Wrath*, *Strife*, *Seditions*, *Heresies*, *Envyings*, *Murthers*, *Drunkenness*, *Revelling*, and *such like*. Here are Sins, you see, of all the three kinds, that are commonly reckon'd, *i. e.* against God, our Neighbour and our selves. 1. Here's Acts of Impiety towards God, such as *Heresie*, by which is commonly understood, and may be understood here, False and Wicked Opinions concerning God and Religion, Fundamental Errors; *Idolatry*, or the Worshiping false Gods, or the true one in a false and forbidden manner, a way dishonourable to him; *Witchcraft*, or holding Correspondence

dence with Evil Spirits, the Enemies of God. To these we might add Blasphemies, and open Profaneness in Swearing or Cursing, as also gross neglects of God's Worship, a general Indevotion, and customary mis-spending that time which shou'd be dedicated to God's Worship and Service. Again *2ly.* Here are Sins of Injustice or Uncharitableness towards our Neighbour, such as are *Adulteries, Murthers, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions.* And Lastly, Here are Sins against ourselves, or in the Government of our own Persons, such as *Fornication* (tho' that perhaps may be reckon'd also in the former kind) *Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Drunkenness, Revellings,* and all manner of Intemperance.

Now these and such like gross Sins are most properly to be understood by *Works of Darknes.*

II. I next proceed to give you the Reasons why they are so call'd. Now

I. One (and that a main reason) is because they are such Works as in the
gene-

general Opinion of Mankind are reckon'd vile and dishonourable, and are wont therefore, many of 'em, to be forbidden by Humane Laws; And hence Men generally are both asham'd and afraid to commit 'em in the open Day-light, or in the sight and view of others: But if their evil Inclinations, or any Temptation prevail over 'em, so as to make 'em practise such things, yet so long as they have any shame left, they creep into Corners, and seek to do it in the Dark, and hide their Wickedness all they can from the sight of Men. Thus St. Paul tells us, *That they that are drunken are drunken in the night,* 1 Thes. 5. 7. And Job, *That the eye of the adulterer waiteth for the Twilight, saying, no eye shall see me, and he disguiseth his face,* Job 24. And speaking of Thieves, says he, *In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day time, they know not the light. For the Morning is to them as the shadow of death; if one know them they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.* There is Fear indeed as well as Shame that hinders Men from
 acting

acting this sort of Wickedness openly ;
 and Shame itself indeed has always a
 mixture of Fear with it ; it implies a fear of
 Disgrace, and that curbs and checks Men,
 and keeps 'em from committing openly
 the more gross and heinous sort of Sins,
 and from glorying in 'em when they have
 committed 'em, unless they can meet with
 Companions as wicked as themselves, or
 think themselves too strong for any that
 would oppose 'em. Men naturally love to
 have the good Opinion of others, and
 dread the being hated and abhor'd of
 Mankind, which wou'd be the effect of
 many gross and open sorts of Wickedness.
 And therefore what they practise of that
 nature they endeavour to keep as secret
 as ever they can: Yea many seem desirous
 to hide their own Wickedness as much as
 possible even from themselves, 'tis such
 an odious and shameful thing. And there-
 fore they'll scarce dare to look into their
 own Consciences, or consider their own
 ways. They have so ill a Face, and car-
 ry such a Deformity in 'em, that they
 cannot well bear to look at it. And there-
 fore

fore they sometimes invent to themselves miserable Excuses, or take up most senseless and absurd Opinions, only to hide the ugliness of their Vices, that so deform'd a Spectacle as their own Souls are, if seern in a true Glass, may not be a perpetual Terror to 'em.

Now 'tis true, that wicked Men are but Fools in all this, to think, that what they hide from Men, they can hide from the all-seeing Eye of God too ; Or, because they can make a poor shift to deceive themselves a little, that therefore they shall be able to impose upon him, and blind his Eyes. And this therefore shews us another Reason why the Works of Wickedness may very well be call'd *Works of Darknes*, Viz.

2. Because they proceed from a darkned Mind, a Mind that has some way shut out the Light, at least, do's not suffer the Light of Truth to shine bright and clear as it ought to do. For the thing is so evident, That a Man ought to be obedient to the Laws of his Maker, and that all Sin is Unreasonable in the highest Degree,

gree, and extreemly Foolish; This, I say, is so evident, if a Man will consider any thing, that he can hardly forbear seeing it. But Wicked Men therefore (especially those that are so in an high and notorious Degree) are wont to be afraid of Thinking and serious Reflection, do not care to Examine impartially the Principles on which they go, nor to compare their Actions strictly with the Rule, but rather huddle up the Matter, and suffer their Lusts and Passions, or some Foolish and Licentious Notions, plausibly set off perhaps, by the Wit of some of their Atheistical Companions, to darken and hoodwink their Understandings, so that they do not clearly discern the Folly and Unreasonableness of their own Practices, but go on in a blind and inconsiderate manner; which is quite contrary to the way of good Men, *Whose path, as Solomon speaks, Prov. 4. 18. is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto a perfect day.* And hence it is, that such in Scripture, are call'd *the Children of Light, and of the Day, 1 Thess. 5. 5.*

Where-

Whereas wicked Men are call'd, *The Children of Darknes*, as being such in whom the *Prince of Darknes*, or the *Ruler of the Darknes of this World*, as he is call'd, hath blinded their Minds. Yea, they are call'd *Darknes* itself in the abstract; at the 8th verse of this Chapter. For the Apostle tells the *Ephesians*; That whilst they were in their Heathen State, and liv'd Ungodly and Prophane Lives, they were *Darknes*. *Ye were sometimes darknes, but now are ye light in the Lord*. And this *Darknes* which possesses the Souls of wicked Men, is so palpable and plain to all that have their Minds well enlighten'd with the knowledge of the Truth, that they cannot choose but wonder at it's prevalence, and admire the Sottishness, and Ignorance of those that are so blinded. Whence it is, that the Psalmist speaks it by way of Admiration, *Psal. 14. 4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Implying, that a very little might have serv'd to shew 'em, That 'twas both their Duty and their Interest to act in another manner.

And

And thus the Works of Sin and Wick-
edness, may be styl'd *Works of Darknes*,
as proceeding from a darkned Mind. And
they may be also call'd so,

3. From their tendency and aptness to
darken it still more and more. For this is
certain, That nothing can more tend to
cloud and darken the Reasonable Soul,
than an habitual Indulgence to such Pra-
ctices as are directly contrary to Reason,
and suffering Brutish Lusts and unruly
Passions to bear sway and over-rule the
Understanding. This is the direct way
to extinguish, as far as it can be done, the
Light of Reason, to put out that Candle
of the Lord, as far as a Man is capable
of doing it. And there want not those
who too plainly shew us, that it may be
done in a great measure. They cou'd
not else go on so securely in their wicked
Courses as they do, if they had not gone
a great way towards extinguishing the
Light, and caus'd it to shine but very
dimly; if they had not stiff'd the relu-
ctancy of their Consciences to the practice
of Notorious Impieties. Nevertheless, 'tis
true,

true, they cannot so stifle Conscience, or put out the Light of their own Minds, as to secure themselves, that it shall never trouble 'em no more. Conscience will be awakened, and the Light will shine again, either happily here to bring 'em to Repentance before it be too late, or else to their endless Torment and Confusion hereafter. Yea, there want not Instances of those who have had their Consciences thus awakened to terrifie and torment, and begin an Hell in 'em in this Life, without bringing 'em to a true Repentance. They being such, as in the Apostle's Expression, *Heb. 10. 27.* have had *nothing left 'em, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.*

4. And this minds me of a 4th Reason why, works of Sin and Wickedness may be styl'd, *Works of Darknes*, viz. Because without Repentance, they will certainly bring Men to that State of Wo and Misery, which the Scripture calls by the name of *in exteriori in interiori, outer Darknes*. Whether to signifie its distance, and the Exclu-

Exclusion of those that are there, from the Regions of Light and Glory Above; Or whether it be said by way of Allusion and carrying on a Metaphor. The Kingdom of Heaven, we know, is wont to be compar'd to a Festival Entertainment, and is call'd *The Marriage Supper of the Lamb*, at which they who are Admitted, shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. But it was the Custom, at such Festival Suppers, to light up many Lights in the Room, or Place where the Entertainment was. And then in comparison with that, all without was very dark. And thereto the Phrase of *outer Darknes*, may be suppos'd to allude. But be that as it will, 'tis certain, That as the Scripture sets forth Almighty God, as dwelling in Light inaccessible; so it describes Hell, the Residence of the Prince of Darknes, as a Place void of Light, and tells us, That for Wicked and Ungodly Men, is reserved *the blackness of darkness for ever*, Jude 13. Whether literally to be understood it matters not, so long as we understand by it, That 'tis a Region of Wo

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and Sorrow, as void of all Joy and Comfort, as a total want of Light can make it. And this affords us therefore a 4th Reason why, the works of Sin and Wickedness, whose tendency is to bring us to this Place, may be styl'd *Works of Darkness*.

III. I come now in the next place, to shew you why they are said to be *unfruitful works of darkness*, and how well that Character of Unfruitfulness agrees to 'em. The truth is, the terming 'em *unfruitful*, is (a *metonym*) a Figure whereby we speak less than we intend shou'd be understood. For doubtless, our Apostle did not intend, we shou'd look on these *Works of Darkness*, as only *unfruitful* and unprofitable, as if that were the worst that cou'd be said of 'em, that they did us no good, since 'tis plain, by what has been said already, that they do us the greatest mischief. But his meaning therefore was, to insinuate hereby to us, that as they bring us no good Fruit, are wholly *unfruitful*, as to that, so they are very fruitful of Evil and Mischief

chief to us. 'Tis like what you read in the 7th. of Jer. v. 31. God says there of the People of Israel, *That they built the high places of Tophet—to burn their Sons and their Daughters in the Fire, which I Com-manded them not*, says he. Whereby, He do's not intend (as some weakly enough wou'd infer, from such kind of Expressi-
 ons) to intimate, That Men ought not to do any thing in the Worship of God, which they have not an exprefs Com-mand for, from him, in his written Word. But the full meaning is, That He was so far from having Com-manded it, that He had expressely and peremptorily forbidden it, as the vilest Abomina-tion.

I shou'd shew you therefore, how that this Character of *Unfruitfulness*, agrees to the *Works of Darkness* in both senses, both as it signifies a Barrenness, as to any true Good, and also as it may be here farther understood to imply, their productiveness of the greatest Evil. But I shou'd be too tedious shou'd I go about to shew you this particularly concerning every one of

'em. I shall therefore speak but briefly, and in the general. Now, as the Duty of a Christian consists of three parts, *viz.* His Duty to God, to his Neighbour, and to himself. So Sin and Disobedience (which are the *Works of Darknes*) may in like manner (as has been already intimated) be divided into Works of Impiety towards God; Of Injustice or Uncharitableness to Men; Or else, Mis-governments of a Man's own Person.

And First, For Works of Impiety towards God, which are some of the blackest and foulest of the *Works of Darknes*, such as *Blasphemy*, *Profaneness*, *Total Indevotion*, and neglect of all *Religion*, *Cursing*, *Swearing*, and the like. What fruit can a Man expect to reap from these things? These sure bring neither Pleasure nor Profit with them. It must be a strange Complexion of Soul that can cause a Man to take delight in this sort of Wick- edness, and a very great and unusual accident, if he gains so much as any temporal advantage by it. But this Fruit he is sure to reap, *viz.* That whatsoever Dis-
tress

tress befalls him, he has no God to go to,
 no Providence to put his Trust in, no
 Hope nor Help left, unless he can change
 his Principles, repent, and become a
 new Man, which is one of the hardest
 things imaginable for such People to do.
 Considering therefore how great Distres-
 ses and Calamities Human Nature is ever
 liable to, what Wise Man wou'd ever be
 without the Comforts and Supports of
 Religion under 'em? or wou'd not think
 it the most miserable and forlorn Condi-
 tion to be as without a God in the
 World? Which is the utmost (tho' the
 most vain and absurd hope) of *Atheists*,
Infidels, and *Irreligious People*. Thus you
 see the First sort of the *Works of Darknes*,
 not only do us no good, but they strip us
 of that which is our best and only Sup-
 port and Comfort in a day of Trouble
 and Adversity, even a good Conscience
 and Hope in God, besides that they con-
 sign us over to endless Misery.

In the next place consider what are the
 Fruits of Injustice or Uncharitableness.
 Why a little present Gain, or the quicker

getting of an Estate, is the most that can be pretended. But if we will allow others to be unjust too, and to act by the same Principles, we may soon lose all that we have gain'd; And then we know not how soon we may come to want that Charity our selves which we deny to others in their need. Besides, if we believe that there is a God, to whom Righteousness and Goodness are essential, we can never sure imagine he will suffer any Man to be finally a gainer by his Unrighteousness or Unmercifulness, but will reckon with him severely for it. And what a folly is it then to triumph for a little while in that which must unavoidably have so wofull a Conclusion!

The Third and Last sort of *Works of Darkness*, is that which consists in the Mis-government of our selves, thro' Indulgence to the Sensual Appetite. Concerning which all I shall say at present is, That *Epicurism, Voluptuousness*, with *Excess in Eating and Drinking*, as they seldom fail to bring great Miseries upon Men in this Life, in their Bodies, Estates
and

and Reputations ; So forasmuch as they wholly unfit Men for their Duty, and lay 'em open to all sorts of Temptations, they cannot but be the ready way to endless Ruine and Misery hereafter. And then they may very well according to the utmost sense of our Apostle in the Text be stil'd *Unfruitful Works of Darknes*.

I proceed now to the Fourth thing propos'd ; Which was,

IV. To shew what is meant by having *Fellowship with such Works of Darknes*, and what are the ordinary ways or several Instances wherein Men may be tempted to have that.

Now there are several ways wherein Men may be said to have *Fellowship with the Works of Darknes*. As,

I. And most grossly, when a Man actually joyns with others in any wicked Design or Practice. It may be he is not the first mover in it, but he is put upon it by others, and he concurs with them, and bears his share. This is in the strictest sense an having *Fellowship or Partnership*
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with

with others in Wickedness. And this therefore is here strictly forbidden in all cases whatsoever. We are to have no *Fellowship with the Works of Darknes*, nothing to do with them. We must not think to excuse our selves by saying, that we were drawn in by others, or that we comply'd with such as wou'd have taken it ill of us if we had not, and whom we were loth to disoblige. In all such cases, we must remember that of *Solomon, Prov. 1. 10. My Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not.* Tho' there be never so many of them, whatever Interest they may claim in us, be their Baits never so enticing, or their Pretences never so plausible, yet if we are satisfy'd that the thing they wou'd have us joyn with 'em in is Evil and Unlawful, we must by no means have an hand in it, but rather take the Advice which the same Wise Man gives us at the 15th verse of the same Chapter, *My Son walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path.* Or as you have it at the 14th and 15th Verses of the Fourth Chapter ; *Enter not into the path*
of

of the Wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away. 'Tis good to keep at some convenient distance from it, lest we be tempted, and unwarily fall into it. It is much better for us, that we shou'd be thought a little morose and sowe, of an uncompliant and unyielding Temper, than to be drawn into sinful compliances, or to bear a part in any thing that is unjustifiable and unlawful. But

2. We are not only then truly said to have *Fellowship with the Works of Darkness*, when we our selves are Actors in 'em, and joyn with others in committing 'em, cooperating together in the same unlawful Practices; But also when any way, by Word or Deed, we abet or encourage any in Wickedness; when we shew 'em Favour or Countenance, give 'em any Direction or Counsel in it. In such a Case, Tho' the sinful Action be not our own, yet we make our selves Partakers in it; we have a share in the Guilt, and must expect to have it also in the Punishment. It may be Caution or Policy

Policy may hinder Men sometimes from acting that which is evil, but if they secretly abet or encourage it, however they may escape with Men, they make themselves guilty in the sight of God. Yea

3. Not only the Positive encouraging and abetting of Wickedness by Word or Deed makes a Man Partaker in it, and renders him guilty of having *Fellowship with the Works of Darknes*. But the not hindring, not forbidding it, if he has Authority, not using his endeavour to discourage and discountenance it. For this every good Man is bound to do, even to set himself all he can, by his Example, and by his Authority, and by all the Influence he can tell how to have upon others, to promote Virtue and Holiness, and to put a stop to the growth of Vice and Wickedness. And therefore 'tis not enough that we forbear what we believe to be evil our selves, and do not positively abet and encourage others in the Practice of it, for we may do it tacitely and implicitly, by our Connivance, and by neglecting to admonish and reprove such

such as are under our care, not telling 'em of their Faults nor warning 'em of their Danger, nor shewing our selves desirous of their forbearing sinful Courses and amending their ways.

4. And Lastly, We may be said to be partakers with others in Sin, and to have *Fellowship with the Works of Darkness*, when we knowingly, or carelessly, for want of reasonable and prudent Caution in our Behaviour, give any scandal or offence to others, or lay any stumbling-block in their way, that may probably induce 'em to the commission of any Sin. 'Tis easie to do this, by some ambiguous Words, or Deeds, that are liable to misconstruction, or misinterpretation. The greatest Scandals indeed, are given by downright doing Ill, setting an ill Example before others, or joining in such wicked and unjustifiable Practices as are apt to make Men speak ill of the Professors of Religion, and endanger many's Apostatizing from it. *And wo be to him by whom such offence cometh.* But there may also be Scandals given and Occasions of Falling
set

set in the way of others by doubtful and ambiguous Words or Deeds, which tho' not Evil when rightly understood, yet may be very liable to misconstruction. And the truth is, no Man can be cautious enough, wholly to avoid giving Scandal to some or other, in this manner. But nevertheless, it is our Duty to use what Christian Prudence we can, and reasonably may, to prevent any such thing. And if we have, as we ought to have, a true love to our Brother's Soul, and a tender regard to the Interest of Religion, we shall use what Circumspection we can to prevent any such Evil. We shall, as the Apostle exhorts, *Heb. 10. 24. Consider one another*, and mark each others Temper, as far as we know how, to that purpose, *that we may provoke unto Love, and to good Works.*

And thus having shew'd you, what are the several ways wherein Men may be said to have *fellowship with the Works of Darknes*, or may be tempted to make themselves some way or other partakers in Wickedness; I proceed to that which

was

was propos'd to be done in the 5th. place,

V. To shew, that Christians shou'd have a care of being drawn in by any such Temptations, and instead of that, shou'd upon all occasions, shew their utter dislike of these *Works of Darknes*, and be ready to reprove them. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darknes, but rather reprove them.* That this therefore is a Duty, is evident enough from the plain Words of the Apostle, and from what has been already said upon 'em But I shall Consider the Arguments which he himself urges in this Chapter, to persuade to the Practice of it. The 1st. of which is, The Consideration of that Dreadful Punishment, which unless prevented by Repentance, must certainly overtake both them that work these *Works of Darknes*, and those also that have fellowship, or are partakers with them. To this purpose, he tells'em at this 5th. Verse, *That no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the King-*

Kingdom of Christ and of God: They must therefore be Excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, and Sentenc'd to that *everlasting fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. And because some were ready to make frivolous Excuses and Apologies for some of these Sins, as Fornication, in particular, which the Heathens made but a slight matter of, he adds therefore, at the Verse next following; *Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the Children of disobedience*. And then it follows, *Be ye not therefore partakers with them*. As much as to say, For if ye are, you make yourselves accessory to their Damnation, and to all the sore Judgments that may overtake them also in this Life. And as ye are partakers with them in their Sin, so you must expect also to be sharers in their Punishment. The Argument therefore is exceeding strong, and such as if we have any regard either to the Soul of our Neighbour or our own Souls, must prevail upon us. If we wou'd not ruine them everlastingly, and

and ourselves also with them, we must have a care of being partakers with 'em in Sin.

There is also a Second Argument urg'd by the Apostle to the same purpose, in this Chapter, very fit to work upon Ingenuous Minds: And 'tis taken from the great Indecency that there is in Christians (Professors of so much Purity, and the Disciples of so Holy a Master) having any thing to do with the *Works of Darknes*. Thus you read at the 3d. Verse of this Chapter. *But Fornication and all Uncleanness, or Covetousness* (*πλεονεξία* which may signify any inordinate lusting after, or desiring more than is convenient in any kind, and being plac'd here in such company, is by many Interpreters understood to signifie, not Avarice, but such inordinate Lusts as occasion'd Rapes, Incest, Adultery, &c. things too commonly practis'd at the Idol-Feasts: But) *let not these things be once nam'd among you, says he, as becometh Saints.* For such all Christians are, or should be; and if they are not, their

their Christianity will do 'em no good. And it becomes all such to keep at the greatest distance they can from all Impurity in Thought, Word, or Deed, and from all the Defilement of the *Works of Darknes*. And the same Argument in effect, is urg'd again, at the 8th. Verse, to enforce the preceeding Exhortation (*Be ye not therefore partakers with them*) for ye were sometimes darknes (i. e. in your former Heathen State) But now are ye light in the Lord (i. e. Ye have now had the Light of the Gospel shining amongst you, having been Baptiz'd into the Profession of it, which is call'd, a being Illuminated, or Enlightened, Heb. 10. 32.) *Walk therefore as Children of Light*. And let it appear, that there is a difference between your former, and your present Conversation. Behave yourselves as becomes those that make such a Profession of Purity and Sanctity. And certainly, it is not fit for such to have any thing to do with those *Works of Darknes*, before spoken of, but rather they ought by their good Example, to call Men off from them, and by seasonable

sonable Admonition, and plain Reproof, where they have any Authority, or can reasonably hope for any good success, to endeavour to deter Men from such Practices, and to convince them of the great Folly and Danger of them; and upon all occasions to be ready to shew their utter dislike and Detestation of them. For in vain are they call'd *The Children of Light*, except they abhor the Deeds of Darkness. In vain are they Listed, as the Soldiers of Christ, if they treacherously give Encouragement to his Profess'd Enemies, or are asham'd, or afraid to appear, upon occasion, in the Cause of God and Religion.

VI. And this brings me to the last thing that was propos'd, which was, To make some Application of the Doctrine that has been deliver'd to the present Occasion.

Now the design of our present meeting is to give what furtherance and encouragement we can to that good Work, which out of an honest and Religious

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Zeal

Zeal has bin undertaken and carried on with good effect, by many Pious and Well-disposed Persons, viz. The endeavouring as far as may be, by putting good and wholesome Laws in Execution, to suppress and put a stop to the *Works of Darknes*: Or at least, to cause those that will practise 'em, to keep themselves, within their own proper Sphere, and act 'em in the dark and in private Corners. What they do there, we must leave to the Judgment of God, who sees 'em in their closest and secretest retirements, and will one day *bring to light the hidden things of darknes*, and take vengeance on all the Workers of Iniquity. But when these *Works of Darknes*, grow so Impudent, as to crawl abroad into the Light, they then greatly defile the Land, they shew Men to be come to a prodigious Pitch of Wickedness, and to have cast off all sense of Shame, and they involve all those in a participation of the Guilt, that are Witnesses to such Wickedness, and do not all they can in their Places and

and Stations towards the discountenancing and suppressing of it.

Here therefore, Magistrates are chiefly Concern'd, to use all the Authority they have, Yea, to put it forth and exert it to the uttermost, in the Cause of God, and against open Prophaneness and Irreligion. 'Tis from God, that all Just and Lawful Authority is deriv'd, and He will therefore, certainly expect it shou'd be us'd in his Service, and will look on them as no better than Traitors to him, that use it otherwise. Neither will it suffice for any to say, That they do Punish Vice and Prophaneness according to Law, when Delinquents are brought before 'em, and the Matter fully Prov'd, For this may be true; And yet they may be ready to discourage such as wou'd bring 'em Informations. They may plainly shew an Aversion to the Work of Reformation, and put many needless Rubs and Difficulties in the way of it, tho' they dare not openly and avowedly take part with Evil-doers.

But this is not like Men that have a Zeal for God's Glory, a sense of the heinousness of Sin, of God's just Displeasure against open and notorious Impieties and the Danger such things bring a Nation into. This is not like the way of those good Magistrates we read of in Scripture, who set themselves with all their Might to carry on the Work of Reformation, and to prevent God's Judgments, impending on the People. This favours not of any sense that a Man has of their Blood being requir'd of him, who are misled, or drawn aside, or encourag'd in Sin by his Remissness. A Magistrate should be a Man of Zeal and Courage and always glad of an Opportunity to shew himself *A Terror to evil Works, and a Praise unto them that do well.* For 'tis always to be observ'd, that we speak now of putting Laws in Execution against such things as are known and granted on all hands to be Evil; things which however some may endeavour to palliate and extenuate; yet none is
 so

so impudent as to justify 'em, none so absurd as to pretend to make Conscience of practising 'em. Some there are that have Scrupled the taking an Oath in any Case, but I never heard of any that thought it a Duty to Swear idly in common Discourse. Nor can Drunkenness, or Tipling, or Profaning the Lord's-Day, or Filthiness, or Fornication, or Scoffing at Religion, and Ridiculing the most Sacred Mysteries thereof be pleaded for as Duties.

If therefore Men will not be Zealous against such things as these, how can we hope to find any good Zeal in 'em? If they are grown indifferent as to such Practices, and care not how much such Vices spread, how can they be thought to have any Religion at all in 'em? If neither the Love of God nor of their Neighbour will excite 'em to set themselves against such notorious and open Wickedness, what pretence can they have to Christian Charity?

But after all, tho' a Magistrate have a Sense of these things and be Zealous for Reformation, yet 'tis but little that he can do without the help of others. Profane and Irreligious People, if once they find him bent against 'em, will take care to keep out of his way, and hide their Works of Darkness from his Sight. And there must therefore be Informations given, and Proofs made by others, before he can do much towards putting Laws in Execution against Vice and Profaneness.

Now this is the Work which some here present, and many more both in this City and in other parts of the Kingdom, have very laudably and worthily engag'd themselves in. The Work I am sure is good and highly necessary at this time, when we are call'd upon by Publick Authority to do all we can towards the Suppression of Vice, Immorality and Profaneness, which are own'd in his Majesty's Proclamation to have encreas'd and prevail'd much of late

late Years to the great Dishonour of God, the Scandal of our Profession, and the endangering heavy Judgments to fall on us. And as the Work is so highly seasonable, so I cannot see any good Objection, that is or can be made against it, or any just cause of suspicion, that you engage in it through any other Motives, but a just sense of the great need of it, and an Holy Indignation against those *Works of Darknes* which every good Christian must and ought to abhor.

Shall any think it Pragmaticalness to meddle, when that which ought to be dearest to us, the Cause of God and Religion is so nearly concern'd? When such notorious Scandals are brought upon our Profession, and there is such imminent danger of God's Judgments overtaking us by reason of our Impieties? As well we may think it Pragmaticalness to endeavour to quench a raging Fire, or to put a stop to the Infection of a Contagious Disease. And 'tis no-

thing but the want of a due sense of the great Evil and Danger of such gross and heinous Sins, that makes any put a difference in these Cases, and content themselves with a Laodicean Luke-warmness in matters of such Concernment

But the Name of an Informer, is by many held in great Detestation, and they cannot bear the Reproach of being reckon'd in that number. Now 'tis true, if the business were to inform against People, otherwise innocent in their Lives, but Worshipping God, according to their Conscience, in a way not allow'd, and perhaps erroneous, I shou'd not blame a Man for being somewhat shy in such a Case; Or if 'twere to be an Informer upon any Penal Statues about indifferent Matters, however, all such may not be to be condemn'd; yet I wou'd be no very zealous Advocate for 'em.

But here the Case is quite otherwise. For here that which you are desired to
In-

Inform against, is a known and confess'd Evil; and 'tis only in such Cases, when there appears no better way of reclaiming the Offender: And the End and Design of it, is not the getting any Gain to yourselves, but the promoting a most needful Reformation, and the preventing thereby God's heavy Judgments from falling upon us all. 'Tis great Charity therefore to the Publick, Yea, and Charity also to the Persons Inform'd against (since gentler Methods will not do) to endeavour to have 'em Punish'd according to the Law. And if the Laws were well made, and but in pursuance of the Laws of God, it cannot but be a laudable thing in any one, to endeavour what in him lies, to have 'em put in Execution. But still, some will be ready to Object, That there's little hope of doing any great good this way. We may make a great stir and disturbance among our Neighbours, but the World is not like to be much mended by any of these Methods.

And

And this now is spoken like one whose Principle it is to let the World go as it will; but not like a Christian, who knows 'tis his Duty to be as the Light of the World, and the Salt of the Earth. We know not how great Effects God may sometimes bring about by Means that to us appear very unlikely, and improbable. But when He shall be pleas'd to stir up the Spirits of any Number of Persons to go about so Great and Good a Work as this is, I wou'd be loth to be found in the number of those that shou'd slight and discourage it, and not rather do all they can to promote those good Ends that Providence seems to have in it. Let us have a care we be not found Fighters against God. But I am sure, all they who set themselves to beat down Vice and Wickedness, and Profaneness, are Fighters for him; and if they do it but in such a way as is agreeable to the Laws of God and Man, they Fight Lawfully. And 'tis our Duty to help 'em, and pray for their Success.

There

There has already been, tho' not all the Success that is to be wish'd for of so Pious an Undertaking; yet more perhaps, than cou'd well have been expected in so Corrupt an Age. And if God has any Mercy in store for these Nations, and does not intend to give us up to Destruction, we have reason to hope, That this is the Way his Providence has found out to fit us for Mercy; And that He will accordingly, more and more Excite a Spirit of Reformation, and stir up the Minds of all Religious and well-dispos'd Persons, of what different Persuasions soever, to join Unanimously in it. Which wou'd be an happy presage of Good to these Kingdoms, Yea, to all the Churches of the Reformation: In which, the too great Unreformedness of Men's Lives, after such a Restitution and Reviving of Pure and Primitive Christian Doctrine, has doubtless, been the thing that has provok'd God to suffer the Reformation to lose so much Ground,

Ground, as it has done of late Years, and to have such a terrible Havock and Devastation made of it, and such a Dreadful Persecution of it's Professors, as there is in our Neighbour Nation, and in other Places. The Consideration of these things, ought, I am sure, to awaken us, and cause us to Amend in time, and to do all that in us lies to promote a general Reformation, before Judgments overtake us.

And may Almighty God in his great Mercy, encrease the Number, and strengthen the Hands of those Faithful Magistrates, that out of a true Zeal for his Honour, and the good of Men, do set themselves with Heart and Hand to so Excellent a Work, and of those also who are assistant and helpful to 'em therein. May He bless their Endeavours, and give 'em such Success, that his Anger may be turned away from us, that we may become a Reform'd People in our Lives, as well as in our Doctrine, and He may delight to dwell

dwell in the midst of us. This is a
 Prayer, in which, *The Children of Light*,
 I am sure, will heartily join with me
And this God of his infinite Mercy Grant
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.



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